



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Office of Inspector General
Washington, D.C. 20230

JUL 11 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. James M. Turner
Deputy Director
National Institute of Standards and Technology

Judith J. Gordon

FROM: Judith J. Gordon
Assistant Inspector General for Audit and Evaluation

SUBJECT: Review of NIST Policies and Procedures
For Handling Radioactive Materials

We have received a request from Deputy Secretary John Sullivan to review the plutonium spill that occurred at NIST's Boulder, Colorado, laboratories on June 9, 2008, giving particular attention to lessons learned from the incident as well as to NIST's protocols for protecting its employees and the community at large.

Because NIST uses radioactive materials at both its Boulder and Gaithersburg, Maryland, campuses, our review will involve both facilities. We plan to evaluate NIST's training, safety, and response policies and procedures relative to radioactive materials as well as controls over its inventory of and access to these materials. We will also assess whether the agency's management structure facilitates incident preparedness and response, and the extent to which security and emergency protocols protect the health and safety of NIST employees at both campuses and the surrounding communities.

If you have any questions about this review, please contact me at (202) 482-5643, or Daniel Buchtel, assistant regional inspector general for audits in our Denver Regional Office, at (303) 312-7660.

cc: Stephen Willet, NIST audit liaison